



David J. Della
Seattle City Councilmember

SEATTLE PERSPECTIVE

Getting Things Done & Getting Seattle Working Again

Newsletter from Seattle City Councilmember David J. Della

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In This Issue...

GREETINGS

MOST RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

- ▶ *Alaskan Way Viaduct*
- ▶ *Key Arena*

PARTIAL LISTING OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN 2005 AND SELECTED HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE BUDGET

- ▶ *Putting People First*
- ▶ *Keeping Parks Green, Clean, and Accessible*
- ▶ *Building Strong Schools & Healthy Communities*
- ▶ *Preserving and Creating Livable Wage Jobs*
- ▶ *Keeping Communities Safe*
- ▶ *Protecting Ratepayers*
- ▶ *Celebrating New Parks and Gathering Places*
- ▶ *Bringing City Hall to Your Community*

UPDATES ON OTHER ISSUES

- ▶ *Homeless Memorial*
- ▶ *Olympic Sculpture Park*
- ▶ *Open Spaces/Parks Opportunity Fund*
- ▶ *Skate Park Plan*
- ▶ *Joint City/ Schools Committee*
- ▶ *Superintendent's Community Advisory Committee on Investing for Educational Excellence*
- ▶ *Seattle Monorail Project*
- ▶ *Filipino Veterans*

UPCOMING EVENTS

GREETINGS

I am proud to continue working hard for you to tackle important city issues. This is the time of the year when we take stock of what we've accomplished and identify priorities for the upcoming year. In this edition of *Seattle Perspective*, I'll cover the Alaskan Way Viaduct and why we have to get moving now to rebuild it. I'll also talk about the Sonics' quest to remodel Key Arena. And, in this edition you'll also find a summary of some of my accomplishments this year.

In this newsletter, you'll also find brief updates on other issues including: efforts to develop a homeless memorial, equal recognition for Filipino veterans, Olympic Sculpture Park, Pro Parks Levy Opportunity Fund awards, the development of a Skateboard Park Plan, and meetings of the Joint City/Schools Committee.

I wish you and your family happy holidays and the best for the coming new year! Please continue to contact me to share your thoughts on neighborhood and city issues. I look forward to hearing from you and continuing to work with you to get things done and get Seattle working again.

Sincerely,

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MOST RECENT NEWS

Alaskan Way Viaduct

I've heard from many people who are scared to drive on the Viaduct in its current and rapidly deteriorating state. I've heard from others who admit that they hold their breath when they drive across this dangerous stretch of highway. Let's stop holding our breath on this one. For the sake of safety and jobs – *Seattle must act now and replace the Alaskan Way Viaduct by rebuilding it.*

The Viaduct suffered immense damage in the Nisqually Earthquake of 2001. Although it still stands and functions today, it is seismically at risk. Engineers estimate that it has a 1 in 20 chance of failure in an earthquake in the next ten years. As of March 2005, it has physically moved 4 ½ inches. This may not sound like much but experts say that it only needs to shift another 1 ½ inches before major repairs need to be made. The nearby seawall is also deteriorating because of underwater organisms that are damaging the timbers.



(Bracings attached to the Alaskan Way Viaduct)

The Alaskan Way Viaduct corridor is a critical piece in our transportation system, carrying about 110,000 vehicles per day, or one quarter of the vehicle trips moving through downtown. Continued deterioration or failure of the Viaduct and seawall represent a serious threat to our region's public safety and economy.



(Councilmember Della calling for immediate action at the Alaskan Way Viaduct)

Nearly a year ago, City Council adopted a resolution to support a tunnel option for the replacement of the Viaduct. However, since then, times have changed. Hurricane Katrina changed everything. It changed the federal budget picture and for many of us, it was a reminder that infrastructure must be critically evaluated for safety. When Council adopted its preferred alternative last year, many of us also recognized that should funding not be available for a tunnel, the most viable and affordable option is to simply rebuild the viaduct.

The tunnel option is estimated to cost between \$4.1 and \$4.4 billion and is projected to take between seven to nine years to construct. Alternatively, a rebuild of the viaduct is estimated to cost between \$2.7 billion and \$3.1 billion and is projected to take between six to eight years to build. Funds are available *now* to rebuild the viaduct.

During the 2005 legislative session, the Legislature appropriated \$2 billion in gas tax monies to go toward the Viaduct. This funding was put in danger by Initiative 912. Voters soundly defeated the measure, which would have eliminated funding for transportation improvements statewide, this past November. Voters have given us some certainty. We owe it to the public to provide some certainty. The safety risks are grave and they are real. Do we really want to risk peoples' lives betting on an aesthetic point of view?

Given the new constraints in the federal budget, I don't think it would be realistic or responsible to count on federal dollars to help us build a tunnel. We have the money to replace the viaduct in hand now. I can't consciously stand by and let safety, jobs and transportation take a backseat to a gold-plated alternative.

MOST RECENT NEWS

KeyArena

Last year, the Mayor hired a lobbyist to ask the state legislature for funds for an extensive remodel of KeyArena on behalf of the Sonics. The Sonics maintain that they are losing money under their current lease with the City.

The City is also losing money. In 1994, the City issued \$73.4 million in bonds to help pay for an overhaul of KeyArena on behalf of the Sonics. Approximately \$60 million in payments remain to be paid through 2014. In recent years, funding for KeyArena's previous remodel has become a financial problem for Seattle Center and the City. Between 1995 and 2005, revenues from club seats, suites and naming rights have generated approximately \$12.5 million less than the necessary payments the Seattle Center must make to the City as a result of the remodel. Seattle Center—and ultimately the City, is responsible for making up the difference between revenues and expenditures related to the 1994 KeyArena remodel.

The Sonics are trying to make a case that an overhaul of KeyArena is nec-

essary to keeping a sustainable operation in Seattle. The Sonics sought approximately \$200 million in public funds during the 2005 legislative session for the renovation of KeyArena. Legislation introduced at the state level would have conditioned the receipt of this funding on the Sonics taking over the operations of KeyArena. At present, the City operates KeyArena which also hosts the Seattle Thunderbirds, concerts and numerous family and community events.

City Council was not involved in the decision to lobby the legislature for a KeyArena overhaul. Council did not even receive any information about the proposal from last year's legislative session to indicate whether or not it was something that the City should have been supporting. We are stewards of the public's money, and we need to examine every expenditure, know all of the facts, and make decisions in an open and transparent manner. That is why this past October, Councilmember Nick Licata and I, worked to pass a resolution that requires public review of any City request to the Washington State Legislature for more funds for the redevelopment

ment of KeyArena. The resolution also specified that the City reserves the right to determine who operates this publicly-owned asset.

I pushed for this oversight because I am concerned about the financial, economic and labor implications of any proposed state legislation regarding current and future improvements to KeyArena. The City's priorities for requesting support from the State Legislature are education, jobs and transportation. We don't—and won't—know where a KeyArena remodel fits into the City's priorities without closer scrutiny and a public discussion of this issue. Over the coming year, we hope to examine this issue and the Sonics proposal in greater detail. Also included in this conversation will be the outstanding money still owed from the last remodel of KeyArena in 1995. For the past few years, the debt service on the last remodel has been a major drain on the finances of Seattle Center. Any conversations that we have with regard to the future of KeyArena must start from and focus on what is in the best interests of Seattle Center and the citizens of Seattle.

PARTIAL LISTING OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN 2005 & SELECTED HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE BUDGET

Putting People First

◆ Adopted a 2006 Budget that is responsive, sustainable, and most importantly, puts people first. City Council stayed true to our core values of strengthening our social safety net by protecting our most vulnerable populations and helping individuals and families by adding \$2 million to the 2006 Budget for food, shelter, and health care. At the same time, we

continued to be responsible and to think ahead by increasing the City's "rainy day fund."

◆ Co-sponsored a resolution to identify and address issues faced by Seattle's immigrant and refugee communities.



(City Council deliberating at a Budget Committee)

PARTIAL LISTING OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN 2005 & SELECTED HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE BUDGET



(Grand Opening at the Cal Anderson Park)

Keeping Parks Green, Clean, & Accessible

- ◆ Led the effort to transform Occidental Park into a vibrant and active public space. Required that any tree removed from Occidental Park in a redesign be replaced on a two-for-one basis.
- ◆ Initiated the development of Business and Major Maintenance Plans, for the Department of Parks and Recreation, to ensure that our park system continues to be green, clean and accessible long into the future.
- ◆ Secured funding to ensure that our children and youth have a safe and nurturing place to go after-school at the Rainier Vista Boys & Girls Club
- ◆ Pushed to extend operating hours of selected community centers' Late Night Recreation Program for Teens. *Late Night* provides a fun and safe environment for our city's youth so that they can have positive activities to

participate in.

- ◆ Secured funding to complete a community-driven effort to make improvements at Wedgewood's Dahl Playfield
- ◆ Worked to protect open space by supporting funds to purchase Soundways, an important, contiguous piece of undeveloped land located in West Seattle.
- ◆ Helped to jumpstart a proposal to develop a children's play area at Denny Park by working to include funds in this year's budget.

Building Strong Schools & Healthy Communities

- ◆ Strengthened the partnership between the City and Seattle Public School District by initiating and securing an agreement to provide additional analytical assistance to the District to help them emerge from a difficult time. This agreement also helped to provide the City with valuable demographic information.
- ◆ Continued the partnership with the School District by leading the process, review, and unanimous adoption of an implementation plan for putting into action the \$116 million voter-approved Families & Education Levy. This plan will ensure that programs meet the needs of all of Seattle's diverse communities and help to close the academic achievement gap. Implementation plans make good on our promise to voters that there would be increased accountability in the levy by tracking school readiness, academic achievement and reduction in drop-out rates.
- ◆ Convened a discussion among elected officials, education experts,

and students about Digital Learning Commons (DLC). DLC provides on-line courses, tutoring tools and reference materials to help students achieve academically. By being available to students from their own homes, schools, community centers, or libraries, DLC has been effective in helping close the achievement gap for all Seattle children and youth regardless of their backgrounds or income levels.

- ◆ Worked to protect the \$50 million community-development fund for mitigating the effects of the construction of the Sound Transit line in southeast Seattle.



(Fishermen's Terminal is home to hundreds of living wage jobs.)

Preserving & Creating Livable Wage Jobs

- ◆ Initiated the effort to keep Interbay as a working industrial and maritime base. Protecting traditional industrial and maritime industries is important to ensuring the City maintains a diverse economic base. Convened Councilmembers, Port staff, an expert economist, and a member of the Fishermen's Terminal Advisory Committee to discuss the future of Fishermen's Terminal. The discussion was in direct response to a screening of a film entitled, "Fishermen's Terminal,"

PARTIAL LISTING OF ACCOMPLISHMENT IN 2005 & SELECTED HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE BUDGET

which highlighted issues surrounding the Port of Seattle's decision to open Fishermen's Terminal to pleasure boats.

- ◆ Worked to preserve and create living wage jobs by maintaining the City's support for organizations that promote family-wage jobs and economic development, such as Port JOBS, Trade Development Alliance, and enterprise Seattle.
- ◆ Led the work of the Puget Sound Industrial Excellence Center, which assists local businesses with a focus on manufacturing, construction and transportation industries.
- ◆ Worked to spur economic development in the International District by supporting streetcar development, improving public safety, and encouraging community involvement.

Keeping Communities Safe

- ◆ Co-convened a brown bag discussion among community members, staff, and elected officials to discuss possible strategies to reduce the harm and costs of drug abuse.
- ◆ Co-convened a Public Safety Summit where over 200 people participated and shared their concerns and ideas to improve public safety in all neighborhoods.

Protecting Ratepayers

- ◆ Demanded greater accountability of Seattle City Light (SCL) by implementing a set of financial policies that improves SCL's financial condition and protects ratepayers. These policies ensure that SCL is financially sound in the long-term, that its utility debt is reduced, and that savings will be passed on to ratepayers in the future.

- ◆ Led the initiative for the City to explore a broader range of hybrid and alternative fuel vehicles, beyond compact and sub-compacts, for the City Fleet to purchase. All-electric vehicles that are now becoming available in the marketplace will also be explored.

Celebrating New Parks & Gathering Places

I'm proud to have been a part of several groundbreakings and openings of new/ improved parks and community centers throughout the City. These improvements have been made possible through voter-approved levies including the Pro Parks Levy and the Community Centers and Seattle Center Levy. Selected groundbreakings, openings, and ceremonies I had the privilege to participate in include:

Yesler Community Center Grand Opening * Northgate Community Center/Library/Park Groundbreaking * New off-leash area in Capitol Hill * Arboretum Shoreline Trail Restoration Project * Kiwanis Ravine * Luna Park Grand Opening * Kubota Garden Dedication * Benefit Park Grand Opening * Cascade Park Grand Opening * Homer Harris Park Dedication * Southwest Community Center Grand Opening * Historic Cooper School * City Hall Plaza Grand Opening



(Councilmembers Della, Drago, and Licata at the grand opening of the City Hall Plaza)

Bringing City Hall to Your Community

One of the things I enjoy most about being your Councilmember is the opportunity to visit with you and to understand what works well and what improvements can be made. Over the course of this year, I have been impressed and inspired by the dedication of community members, business leaders, and city staff who are working together to improve the quality of life in our City. Throughout the year I have had the privilege to visit:

All Neighborhood District Councils * City Neighborhood Council Meetings * Numerous parks and community centers * Police Patrols * Fire Stations * Seattle Neighborhood Groups * Chamber of Commerce meetings * Community organizations



(Children playing at the City Hall Plaza)

UPDATES ON OTHER ISSUES

Homeless Memorial

This past November, I co-sponsored a resolution to support efforts to establish a, "Place of Remembrance" in a public place in the City that recognizes the dignity of residents who, while homeless, passed away. Each year, as many as one hundred bodies in King County remain unclaimed and are buried together in unmarked common graves. This resolution is an important statement reflecting that everyone deserves dignity at the end of his/ her life. I salute the efforts of the Women in Black and their supporters because they have been working for such a "Place of Remembrance" since 2003.



(City Councilmembers at the groundbreaking of the new Olympic Sculpture Park)

Olympic Sculpture Park

Our City's waterfront is our City's front porch. Pretty soon our 'front porch' will have a beautiful new amenity. The Olympic Sculpture Park, slated for completion and opening next summer, will add 8.5 acres of new open space to our City. This quarter, Council adopted legislation that will increase pedestrian access to the park by allowing the Seattle Art Museum to build two skybridges that will physically connect Olympic Sculpture

Park on Western Avenue to Seattle's waterfront. When completed, pedestrians will be able to walk from the Sculpture Park over Elliott Avenue and Alaskan Way down to the waterfront on Elliott Bay. The legislation also ensures access to the water from Belltown and surrounding neighborhoods, integrating the Sculpture Park with Myrtle Edwards Park and highlighting the entire community. As our city continues to grow, we are taking every opportunity to reclaim open space. This new park will be a tremendous addition to our City's waterfront.

Open Spaces/Parks Opportunity Fund

This quarter, I led the review and adoption of the Council's approval of \$3.8 million for park projects funded through the Pro Parks Levy Opportunity Fund. Eighteen park development and acquisition projects were recommended to Council through an extensive process facilitated by the Pro Parks Levy Oversight Committee. Having green spaces for everyone to enjoy is important as our community continues to grow. These funds will go a long way in creating and enhancing open spaces in areas of our city that need it the most. Examples of these projects include: creating a new public plaza in the Junction Plaza District of West Seattle, restoring and improving the play area at Powell Barnett Park, and developing Pinehurst Pocket Park.



(A skateboarder showing his skills.)

Skate Park Plan

Soon after I became Chair of the Council's committee on Parks, I was approached by a group of skateboarders and parents of skateboarders who were frustrated because they felt that there was a lack of safe, skate-able terrain in our City. Working together, we started talking about different ideas and possibilities to help accommodate the growing need for infrastructure for this rapidly growing sport and recreational activity.

One of the ideas that came out of this conversation was the engagement of the community in the development of a Seattle Skatepark System Plan. This effort is modeled after a similar effort undertaken in Portland. Skateboarding is one of the fastest growing sports in North America and it continues to gain popularity. While being a relatively new sport, the City hasn't done a whole lot of planning and development to meet the increasing demand for skateboard facilities. Development of skate parks is nowhere in the Joint Athletic Facilities Development Program or in the Parks Department's COMP Plan – two documents that the department uses to guide its decisions in investing in infrastructure. The Parks Department would like to do more planning to help meet the growing need for skate parks but lacked the resources to do something.

UPDATES ON OTHER ISSUES

During the budget process, I worked with my colleagues to help secure funds to do this type of planning. These funds will be complemented by a resolution that I will put forward in the early part of 2006. This resolution will spell out a process whereby a Skate Park Advisory Task Force will be convened to work with the Parks Department and a consultant to assist the City in developing this citywide skate park system plan.

While plans for different-sized skateboard parks throughout the City are underway for the future, we must do what we can now to try and meet the current demand for skateboard parks. During this year's budget process, I was proud to secure additional funding to provide for a larger, new skate park in Lower Woodland Park. With these funds, this skateboard park will be able to safely accommodate children and skateboarders of all skill-levels.

Joint City/ Schools Committee

This year, I, along with School Board Director Irene Stewart, co-chaired four meetings of the Joint City Council/Seattle School Committee. This committee was established in 1983 to provide city and school leaders the opportunity to dialogue about issues of mutual interest to the school district and city. At our most recent meeting in the fall, we discussed: the latest developments in the implementation of the Families & Education Levy; the scope of the City's investments in children, youth and families outside of the Levy; trends affecting public school market share/enrollment; how the City and School District can work together with regard



(Councilmember Della and Superintendent Raj Manhas at a celebration at Viewlands Elementary School)

to educational priorities during the upcoming legislative session; and the latest news on the Superintendent's Community Advisory Committee on Investing in Education Excellence.

Superintendent's Community Advisory Committee on Investing for Educational Excellence (CACIEE)

I continue to closely follow the progress of the CACIEE whose charge is to provide recommendations on the development and implementation of a short and long-term financial plan/strategy to advance academic achievement. At its most recent meeting, committee members reviewed a projection that the district faces budget shortfalls of \$15 million in 2006/07, \$25 million in 2007/08, and \$41 million in 2008/09. The Committee is currently seeking public comment on its preliminary recommendations that will address these budget shortfalls while advancing academic achievement. The Committee's preliminary recommendations and more information on the public process can be found on the School District's website at: www.seattleschools.org

Seattle Monorail Project (SMP)

Overwhelmingly, Seattle voters rejected the Seattle Monorail Project. Before this vote, financial viability concerns left City Council with little choice but to take action to deny the use of city rights-of-way to the Seattle Monorail Project. Now, we want to make sure that properties owned by SMP are disposed of in a manner that makes sense and provides public benefits. Furthermore, while this particular project under its current governance structure may not have been the most viable, I still believe that we need to continue to work toward solving our congestion woes by investing in mass transit, fixing our roads and rebuilding the Alaskan Way Viaduct. A healthy transportation system is vital to a healthy economy and healthy communities. I will continue to push for fiscal responsibility in *all* transportation options.

UPDATES ON OTHER ISSUES

Filipino Veterans

In 1942, President Franklin Roosevelt called on young Filipino men to fight for America during World War II. They were promised the same benefits as any U.S. war veteran. Filipino men fought side by side with American soldiers, suffering with them through the Bataan Death March where they were forced to walk for days without food, water and medicine. They then endured more pain in prison camps. Even so, after the war, the promise of benefits was rescinded. Seattle is home to many of these brave Filipino American veterans. Now, in their twilight years, they deserve—at least—the dignity of restoring that promise made more than sixty years ago.

I initiated the City Council's effort to honor local Filipino World War II veterans and prepared a resolution that asked Congress to make good on a promise made by a U.S. President over sixty years ago by passing the Filipino Veterans Equity Act of 2005. Action by Congress to adopt the Filipino Equity Bill is long overdue.



(Councilmember Della with members of the Filipino American Veterans of Washington and supporters)

UPCOMING EVENTS

Families and Education Levy Oversight Committee

January 17th, 4:00 PM
City Hall, 3rd floor, Room 370

State of the Neighborhood Summit

January 18, 2006, 6:00 PM to 9:00 PM
City Hall, 600 4th Avenue
Bertha Landes Conference Room

Joint City Council / School District Committee Meeting

January 27th, 9:30 AM to 11:00 AM
City Hall, Council Chamber

City Neighborhood Council, Budget Priorities Conference

January 28, 2006, 8:30 AM to 3:00 PM
Seattle Center
Center House Conference Rooms A and H, Level 3

Crisis Clinic 2-1-1 Launching

February 22, 2006, 5:30 PM
Bell Harbor Conference

Thank you for taking the time to read this edition of "Seattle Perspective."

Please contact me about any issues that are important to you. I would also like to encourage you to visit my website at <http://www.seattle.gov/council/della/>, to get the latest news and information on City Council activities.